

## DUAL PURPOSE SHORTHORNS AND THEIR ROLE

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Shorthorns are already a dual purpose breed: so what we are discussing in this session is the dual purpose type within the breed. This discussion is concentrated into a short period of time. Therefore, as lead-off speaker, I suggest that our thoughts be concentrated mainly on three specific questions in the hope that, out of the answers, we may come to at least three agreed conclusions.

This, of course, pre-supposes that the questions themselves make sense. An example of a frequently heard query which, to Shorthorn breeders at any rate, should surely be nonsense is: "Are your cattle pedigree or commercial?" It makes no sense because, unless pedigree cattle are commercially viable, their breeders will presently be out of pocket and ultimately out of business. The reason for such a question can only be that, in the past, pedigree breeders have tended too much to sell their cattle to one another, and too little to enter into commercial competition in wider markets. If breeders confine themselves to a restricted circle, in these times of economic recession, that circle is bound to become ever more restricted at an ever increasing speed, until they finally disappear in a fundamental fiasco!

The questions which I now ask, and which I hope make sense to you, are:

First How does one define Dual Purpose Shorthorns?

Secondly What are their advantages?

Thirdly How best can they be bred?

I now suggest answers from my own experience which, in conjunction with the views of breeders from other countries, may hopefully produce some sort of consensus.

(A) A Dual Purpose Shorthorn profitably produces both milk and meat. In my own herd, I have steers aged 15 months weighing 1,150 lbs. and cows yielding 1,150 pounds of milk with 4 per cent butterfat, mainly from grass and grass products. Nurse cows are able to suckle four calves each.

(B) It is clearly advantageous for an animal to produce profitably two products instead of only one. But I do stress the words profitably and marketable. With an increasing demand for mince meat, or ground beef, high quality joints could become less marketable. Likewise milk may become less profitable if it is over-produced, as in Europe, and if labour costs become uneconomical: such costs might also detract from the advantage of multiple suckling, which has to be supervised, as compared with single suckling where supervision is not necessary and, in range conditions, is not practicable.

(C) Ideally it is best to breed from ready-made Dual Purpose type. If this is not possible, I have personally found it easier to put meat into dairy types rather than to increase milk out of beef types. In view of the growing numbers of poll Shorthorns, it may now prove of long-term benefit to introduce that strain also. There is a tradition of incompatibility between milk genes and beef genes; but this can be overcome by judicious selection and patient tenacity. There is no short cut to success, and attempts at "instant breeding" have instantly produced a "no-purpose" type that is neither useful nor ornamental.

From these preliminary answers, I would deduce one over-all conclusion: that, throughout the world, it is absolutely essential to keep the three main types of Shorthorn cattle--dairy, beef and dual purpose---always available for breeding purposes, so that different combinations of genes can readily be used to meet varying needs in various places. And I must conclude with a friendly warning that it is not sufficient simply to ask sensible questions, or even to elicit rational answers: what is vital is to make correct deductions from the answers---and that, Mr. Chairman, primarily rests in your capable hands.



